

JESUS BEFORE PILATE.

[An essay read at the Ashland Sunday-school, by Clara Worst.]

The sun was not yet high above the horizon and its light had not found a way through the lofty windows of the judgment hall. The Tribunal sat in unilluminated whiteness, which was relieved only by the velvet hangings of a somber, purple tint.

Before them stood the majestic, white-robed figure of the Divine. No shadow of fear blanched his serene countenance. He stood erect as a king of a thousand worlds might stand, conscious of his power.

After the reading of the indictment, Pilate was silent. He was reluctant even to look upon the stately "Nazarene." But the Sanhedrim was becoming impatient, and he must act.

"Art thou the King of the Jews?" Then the sweet voice stirred the air. "Thou sayest it." But, when the chief priests made false accusations against him, he answered nothing. Then said Pilate, "Answerest thou nothing? Hearkest thou not how many things are witnessed against thee?" But no words passed the lips of the accused.

A flood of light burst through a side window and lighted up his bronze gold hair, clustered in thick waves upon his brow, with an iridescent crown. He called himself a king. Full well they knew they had no king but Caesar.

Pilate can find no fault with the man, and, with throbbing temples and misty sight, he cries out, "What hast thou done?" If he had spoken he might have said, "What have I done? I have made life sweeter, and have robbed death of its bitterness. I have brought hope and heaven to the children of men."

Then said Pilate, "Ye have a custom that I release unto you one at the Pass-over, will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?" But they cried, "Not this man, but Barabbas." A Roman soldier roughly forced Barabbas before the council, wild-eyed, half-starved, and with fierce aspect. Facing him was the sublime contrast, but the grandeur of that look from his deep blue eyes melted not their hearts, and they cried, "Crucify Him!" and "release Barabbas!" In the midst of this confusion, a youth magnificently clothed was given entrance, and Pilate recognized his wife's favorite page. He bore a message from her, one of the most beautiful of Roman women, known for her haughty and fearless disposition. Trembling, he read the words, "Have thou nothing to do with that just man, for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him." But the one cry

of the multitude was, "Crucify Him!" With one sad look toward the condemned, he dipped his hands into a shining bowl, rinsing them over and over again in the clear cold water. As he shook the drops away from him, he cried in a loud penetrating voice. "I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it." With one accord men and women alike cried out, "His blood be upon us and on our children!"—the self-invoked doom of a people.

Surely Pilate turned away his eyes as he lifted the lash, for such an instrument must needs wound the tender flesh until the blood would spring and splash in drops upon the marble pavement. But no sound passed the lips of the divine Sufferer. Amid a thousand scoffers he was led away, a circle of thorns pressed fiercely upon his noble brow, a scarlet mantle thrown upon his bleeding back, and, as a scepter, a reed in his right hand.

Well might Pilate's remaining days be blasted, the one man who had power to crucify Christ. But of him, all ages will declare, "He feared man rather than God."

INCONSPICUOUS CHURCH WORK.

There are some churches whose work is constantly presented to the public through the press. All that is done, all that is said, all that is given, is quickly heralded. The name of the pastor is prominently mentioned in connection with that of the church, and both pastor and church seem to be at the head of all spiritual activity. Other men and other churches are counted dead and without influence because their names do not appear in the public prints. This is a grievous mistake, and there is danger that the evil may increase. A good thing ought to be reported, for the good is likely to be increased; but not all good things are reported, and the conclusion that that which is not made conspicuous is worthless or dead is a blundering mistake. Some of the best Christian work in progress in the world is never declared in public, and many of the best servants of Christ will surprise the multitudes when they are placed at the head by the Master at the final award. Names and reports of church work get into publicity in all sorts of ways. Some men report their own doings, send statistics of their church activities; newspaper men belong to some churches, and so quickly give notoriety to all proceedings. Friends circulate the important items of interest about those in whom they are interested, while the regular reports given at public gatherings attract the attention to others. Still much,

and often the best, is never pushed forward to public notice. Comparisons and contrasts are often made on the basis of public reports that do great harm to quiet churches, and bring pain and discouragement to noble pastors.

The visit of a noted evangelist is promptly advertised, and one paper quotes from another till the news is widespread, and the church has a name for great activity; but the pastor in another place enters upon the same work with consecrated zeal and rare wisdom, quietly instructs, inspires, persuades his people with larger results than the evangelist obtains, but in so inconspicuous a way as to make no impression upon the newspaper world. Crowds gather where flaming notices call them, and the excitement continues for a season and is widely reported, while a devoted church keeps steadily at its work summer and winter, gathering in constantly with no mention of its results. Halls and theatres are utilized for religious purposes, and great placards draw the curious, while church-goers enter heartily into the work, and the press makes conspicuous a short-lived effort to do good, while it has no word for the church in the same community that has steadily developed stalwart characters, and sent out, as its fruit the best there is in community. Now, inconspicuousness is no crime and no evil. It is no cause for discouragement for either pastor or people. It brings a positive relief from many embarrassments that attend publicity. Religious work should not be hid in a corner; it cannot so be hid; it declares itself by its own fruits, but detailed reports of every item in the service of the pastor, the superintendent, the Christian Endeavor Society, the church, is not necessary to real prosperity. It does not indicate that the reported church is in any better condition than many from which nothing is heard.

This conspicuity creates often an element of pride and an itching desire to be prominent in the public thought, that is unworthy of any Christian laborer. To be approved in sight of the Lord should be the regnant desire. When that prevails there will be activities reaching the hearts and lives of people and causing joy in heaven. Where the feeling has been created that nothing can be successfully done without this publicity, there may be seasons of commotion, and they may be fruitful in good, and they may not. What is needed everywhere to-day is a revival of inconspicuous church work. Each church should quietly and unitedly attend to all the duties that belong to the Church of Christ. Conventions have their place, union services led by an evangelist have